

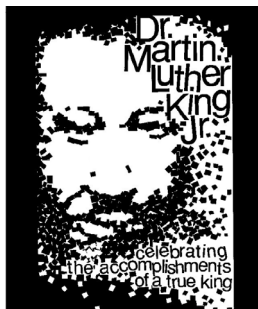
Choices  
Diversity  
Community  
Love  
Tolerance  
Acceptance  
Compassion  
Understanding  
Kindness  
Respect  
Harmony  
Unity  
Columbia

*Harmonious Voices  
in a Diverse Community*

---

*writings from Columbia students*

*Columbia Values Diversity Celebration  
January 15, 2015*



# *What Do I Offer?*

*Mikaela Acton*

I am different.

I have no voice but my own.

I can make progress.

*Ms. Cone, 12th grade, Rock Bridge High School*

# *Where I am from*

*Isabella Ngo*

I am from old stacks of paper covered with messy scribbles in pen

From colorful drawings in crayon and books of all sizes and shapes

I am from the small pine trees beside the front door

The daisies that sprinkled the backyard

I'm from holiday photographs and glasses

From my dad's stories and mom's cooking

And from eating out on Sunday's

I'm from Wake up! and Come here!

And the clean hands song

I'm from hugs every night

I'm from an apartment in Los Angeles and Grandma's little house,

Banana bread and lemon bars

From dogs my dad owned,

The rottweiler that guarded the fridge,

The old album filled with fragments of the past

In a corner of the closet.

I am the rock, overlooked and trampled, yet strong.

*Dr. Willingham, 7th grade, Our Lady of Lourdes Interparish School*

# *Scoring a Goal with Diversity*

*Hannah Butler*

Columbia needs diversity. Without it, life would be boring. People like to do different things. Without people liking different things, there would be no creativity or individual thoughts. If everybody was the same, nobody would think of things like Ben Franklin did. Diversity is something everybody has.

Soccer is all around the world. Every single team has different people. That is because of diversity. Without diversity Columbia Youth Soccer wouldn't be the same. Soccer needs diversity. Soccer needs diversity because without it everyone would want to play the same position, and everyone would come up with the same thing to do during a game. Halftime snacks would be the same every week. Diversity is important.

Diversity allows people to show their skills that other people don't have. If people were not diverse, then I wouldn't have any special skills because everyone else would have that same skill. If everyone had that skill then there wouldn't be anything special about it. My special skills makes me feel good about myself. So if it wasn't for diversity, I wouldn't have the great self-esteem I have.

My soccer team is very diverse. Everybody on my soccer team has imagination, and their own way of seeing things. Some people on my soccer team are Asian and some are Caucasian. All of them are good at a certain position. Without diversity that wouldn't happen. None of them would be good at a certain thing. They would all just enjoy all of the positions and wouldn't care where they were.

Diversity is all around us. We may not notice it, but it is. Diversity is a really good thing, we couldn't have fun without it. I appreciate diversity. Even though other people may not. The thing is, if I believe in something, I won't let anybody tell me it's not true/real. Columbia needs diversity. At least, that is what I believe.

*Ms. McCarty, 6th grade, West Middle School*

# *We are God's Family!*

*Hayley Apel*

It doesn't matter what skin color you are we  
are in the same family brother or sister husband  
or wife it could be that someone likes orange  
and someone likes pink or blue we can all be  
friends under the same roof because we are all  
family. All together in the same world. I may  
like stripes and you may like dots we are all  
different from each other. Some people are  
crazy and some are calm I mean do you really  
have to judge people the way they act or the  
way they talk or the way they look. Cause just  
remember the way you act to theme there going  
to act the same way to you. It doesn't matter  
what skin color you are

*Ms. Germeroth, 4th grade, Rock Bridge Elementary*

# *Cherish Love*

*Kayla Juengermann*

Everyone's different from each other  
In the heart of one there comes another  
Through thick in thin the groups expanded  
To touch the souls their clan commanded  
Never known that either existed  
Their rivalry still implicit  
The final stand is stood together  
For more or less they come forever  
The war is won by neither side  
In other words they stood for pride  
I want this world to be right.  
So maybe we can. Maybe we might

*Ms. Imler, 5th grade, Rock Bridge Elementary*

# *Columbia Values Diversity*

*Seth Comara*

In the 21st Century America it's somewhat difficult to find a community that isn't diverse. People of all ethnicities, religions, and creeds have been living in the same community for years. In Columbia, Missouri, we not only contain a diverse population, but we live together in harmony, peace and tolerance. Columbia is home to an excellent assortment of peoples and the open tolerance practiced within the city limits is the result of how much we value diversity.

When I first arrived in Columbia nearly a decade ago, I was scared. I had been born in a big city: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, but I don't have many memories of that time, I was only an infant then. But then we moved to Richland, Missouri. It was such a small town, with so few people. I don't remember seeing any other colored children like myself, and we only had two churches, one Baptist, and one Methodist. Arriving at Columbia was a minor culture shock to my seven year old self. Compared to Richland, Columbia was the biggest city I could remember seeing. It was the first time that I can remember making real connections with such a diverse group of children.

Almost 10 years later, nothing could surprise me. As I walk through the hallways at my high school, I don't blink at the sight of a woman wearing a hijab. The rainbow colored Gay-Straight Alliance posters have become a welcomed everyday sight. People of many shades and colors are intertwined, the idea of skin color as a social barrier is seen as ridiculous.

Over the last ten years, Columbia became my home, because I consider myself diverse as well, and the love and acceptance I receive in this community has made the people of this city my family. My grandfather on my mother's side was an American soldier stationed in Germany, where he met my German grandmother. When my mother was born, she was given dual citizenship to Germany and the U.S. My father was an immigrant from Ghana, a country in Northern Africa. My mother likes to joke that I was born one-third American, German, and African. Although my father was Muslim, my mother raised me as a Christian. Recently, I "came out" to my friends and family. I feel so lucky to live in a community where a homosexual child of mixed race is accepted by not only his loved ones, but by strangers as well.

The Columbia Public School system also works hard to promote diversity. Diversity training for teachers help them better understand their students, and become more insightful to the differences that might separate them. Minority counselors are available to assure that children of all cultures have equal opportunities to pursue into their adult life. School programs like AVID that assists in helping children of minorities, troubled families, or of low income achieve the dream of accessing a four year college.

Columbia may not be the biggest city. It may not have the highest percentage of minorities. And just maybe it's not the diverse population that makes us special. What makes Columbia really special is the way we treat our family. What makes Columbia special is how we welcome each and every citizen, how we open our arms to every religion, every race, every sexual orientation. No matter what classification we belong to, it doesn't define us, or divide us. Because Columbia truly values Diversity.

*Mrs. Cone, 12th grade, Rock Bridge High School*

## *Diversity*

*Anna Roberts*

We are like crayons. We are all different colors, we all have different personalities, we all have different names, some are sharp, and some are dull. But despite these facts, we all have to learn to live in the same box. If we were all the same color, we might get along but it would be boring. We would try to draw a picture but there would be no detail, no color, the picture would be terrible. Without that diversity we would not be human. Diversity is one of the hardest things for people to live with but one of the most dangerous things to live without. There would be no culture, and we would all enjoy the same things. We would agree on everything and not have a second thought about how it could be a bad idea. Without diversity we would not have a beautiful life. We need all the different colors to paint our picture.

*Mrs. Wahid, 8th grade, Smithton Middle School*

# *I'm not the same*

*Samantha Frock*

I'm not the same. I'm different. It's always been like that. I live. I laugh. I cry. When I get pushed down I push myself back up. I fall down 3 times. But get up 4 times. I see this world in a unique way. I don't waste my time worrying about what I look like. I worry about what the world means. I see bright colors while others see dark. I keep my eyes open when others keep them closed.

I stay close to the happiness. While others fall in a big ball of hate.

Living is something you rarely get. So don't take even one step without being grateful that you are here.

Some times things won't go your way but when you keep trying you over power what you thought you could ever do.

When I was little I never saw the light in people I only saw the dark. But when you open up the door I saw a new point of view of everyone. I saw the DIVERSITY of people. Nobody is the same and that is ok. Some people have different styles and that's ok. Some have different lives and that's ok.

All that matters is that you're diverse. And diverse is something that only you can hold in and keep within you. Because you are diversity.

*Ms. Imler, 5th grade, Rock Bridge Elementary*

# *The Wonderful World*

*Yoyo Chow*

People have different  
friends, some are black,  
some are white, some  
are boys, some are girls,  
some are even animals!  
They all have their  
own talents, their own  
kindness, their own  
weaknesses, their own  
strength and their  
own hearts, but when  
you put your hearts  
all together, it makes a  
wonderful  
COMMUNITY!

*Mrs. Blackburn, 4th grade, Rock Bridge Elementary*

# *Every Single Voice*

*Grace Gomez-Palacio*

I come from a weird mix of people. On my father's side, I am a señorita from Mexico City. On my mother's, I am a girl from right here in Columbia, Missouri. I think I'm even a little Irish. Religion wise, I would technically be half Jewish, and half Christian. As I said, a weird mix. However, this is by no means a bad thing. Personally, I'm very proud to have such a complex blend of cultures to call my own. Hopefully others in my community see this as well.

In my opinion, I believe it is very important that Columbia has the eclectic cross-cultural people like myself. If every single person who lived here were of the same race, religion, culture, and ancestry, we would not be a third of the city we are today. The only thing that could've been worse would be if there were a diverse population, but they didn't interact with each other.



For example, I once had a very close friend, a young boy from South Korea. We had a wonderful relationship, even though he moved away a year later. That was one of the most important experiences I'd ever had. From then on, I learned how essential it is to open your eyes when it comes to not only friends, but almost anyone you will ever meet. Columbia is a city with a wide variety of people, and everyone, no matter how long they lived here, has helped make it what it is today.

In other words, much of this community was shaped, developed, and inspired by so many different people, and their points of view. If you don't believe me, take a walk downtown. Stroll through the very heart of Columbia, and you'll pass at least ten different countries represented by restaurants, shops, and even the people themselves. The best part of all this? Every one of these individual human beings have a voice. Including me.

My generation will bring an entirely new mix of people to our city, and I for one, plan to embrace it. Let us rejoice in the fresh ideas and inventions they will bring. Let us welcome the new opinions and voices they will introduce. My actions and thoughts are all my own, but sooner or later, my voice is just one among thousands. I could sing at the top of my lungs, and still be yet another face in the crowd. But without it, could my city's song ever truly be complete?

*Ms. McCarty, 6th grade, West Middle School*

## *A Hood of Cultures*

*Daniel Fratila*

In my neighborhood, there are three to four different cultures. One is the Romanian culture that is the culture that is in my household. We specialize in potatoes, peas, lamb, and chicken. We don't hang our stockings at the fireplace at Christmas or eat gingerbread. Instead, my mom makes cozonac, a Romanian bread roll filled with ground nuts. We also speak Romanian at the house.

Another culture in the neighborhood, is the Chinese culture. My friend/neighbor, Pan, has this culture. They specialize in eggplant, fried chicken, and squash. They speak Mandarin at their house. They celebrate the Chinese New Year and also celebrate Christmas.

The last culture in the neighborhood is the American culture. My mother's friend is in the neighborhood and she has this culture. Their family watches every Mizzou football game and goes to the homecoming. They sometimes go to Burger King and other fast food restaurants. They hang their stockings up at their fireplace and eat gingerbread at Christmas. They only speak English in their household.

Three different cultures in one neighborhood, our neighborhood. That has inspired this diversity informative. When we get together, diversity doesn't stop us. It doesn't matter if we have different skin colors, what matters is that we are one neighborhood. Even if we are from different cultures.

*Ms. McCarty, 6th grade, West Middle School*

## *Voices Matter*

*Kaiden Schnake*

**V**oices matter and some don't listen  
**O**thers listen but can't find their own voice that's inside  
**I** try to speak so loud but then you crash my words right down  
**C**ause we are mixed, white, and black should I crash your words like that  
**E**ach and every person is important if you close your eyes and open your ears  
**S**omething is wrong something is not right we're all different colors who deserve  
justice and I will fight.

**M**any people won't listen, I want you to listen  
**A**ll voices together are better than one  
**T**his is our world and we need to have voices  
**T**here is a way to make change if we're all together  
**E**ach and every person scream I want rights I will fight  
**R**ight now I'm not alone I am loud with hope and truth and so are you!

*Ms. Archer, 5th grade, Rock Bridge Elementary*

# *We Are Diverse*

*Laura Frymire*

It took too much time  
And too many years  
Too many broken hearts  
And too many tears  
For the people to realize  
We were not whole but broken  
So we loosened our blindfolds  
And spoke up for the unspoken  
Now there are so many colors, religions and faces  
So many traditions, languages and races  
Before, we were labeled  
Struggled with adversity  
But now we're one voice  
And known for our diversity  
We don't judge by brains, money or appearances but instead join together  
And celebrate our differences  
With one voice  
One sound  
Our eyes on the prize  
Bound by the heart of love within us each lies

*Mrs. Wahid, 8th grade, Smithton Middle School*

# *Brave Voice*

*Jovie Hardison*

You use your voice,  
I hope for better but  
you choose worse.  
Everyday, I feel pain,  
waiting for you,  
it makes me insane!  
You say harsh words,  
like stupid, or lame.  
Everyone knows,  
but they can't keep  
you tame.  
Everyday,  
we play the same game,  
except for today,  
someone called out  
your name.  
Their head stuck  
out the door,  
they dare you  
to say more.  
Someone finally  
used their voice,  
rejoice rejoice!  
Now I can walk  
down the hallway without  
living in fear, because  
brave voice, I know you're near.

*Ms. Archer, 5th grade, Rock Bridge Elementary*

# *Columbia Values Diversity*

*Julian Blower*

Columbia values diversity,  
And that means me  
That means you,  
And that means every citizen who walks these streets.  
That means everyone's different but we're still all the same  
We're all part of a particular path,  
A particular future,  
And my voice, your voice,  
Is being bred with care to share the wonders that await us out there.  
Without the stand-up fellows now and our important figures of today  
The teachers of the future,  
And the leaders of our aspirations-  
Their voice would not be important because it would not be passed down.  
It would not be injected into my veins,  
Challenging my views-  
Constructing bright leaders for years-later Columbia,  
Our town.

*Ms. Cone, 10th grade, Rock Bridge High School*

## *Diversity*

*Ella Cleppe*

What is diversity? Is it difference, uniqueness? Or is it similarities, the same? I think it is both. What ever it is we have differences and we have similarities, we have likes and dislikes. Imagine if all of us looked the same. No difference at all. All girls or boys. All of us THE SAME. What would it look like? Just think about it.

*Ms. Imler, 5th grade, Rock Bridge Elementary*

# *The song*

*Madison Nieuwenhuizen*

So, you know we're all different  
But somehow we manage  
Together  
In one big song  
All of us singing with our own rhythm and time  
But yet we somehow manage as one,  
A mass of all races and religious denominations  
We all just sing  
Together  
No one left behind  
Together we go through life  
Yet we are apart  
Our hate separates the song  
We fall apart  
Turned against one another by one thing  
Intolerance  
Yet we still dance  
Still moving  
Through oppression  
Hate  
Intolerance  
But eventually we all realize  
We are all humans  
We are who we are  
It's in our genes  
Diversity  
Brings us back as one  
All singing with our own rhythms and time  
Managing as one  
Together  
We all sing

*Mrs. Wahid, 8th grade, Smithton Middle School*

# *Columbia Has It*

*Ava Hoenes*

I am from Columbia, the city that has diversity in many ways of life, with many diverse people, including me.

I wonder if eventually, everyone will look at people and see who they are, not the way they look or the color of their skin. No one should be judged, even if it's just a little thing, like for example, if you wear glasses or not.

I hear the words of many languages just in the small neighborhood I live in, from Spanish to Japanese, and all sorts of other languages that are special to the families' pasts.

I see the way people try to change into someone they're not. Even though it's not them who should change, it is the people they're trying to be.

I want people to stand up for their family and their traditions, not say, "this is what people do here so we can't do it now."

I am from Columbia, the city that is diverse in many ways of life, with many diverse people, including me.

I pretend that everyone's the same, even though they're not, everyone has something special about them and that is a good thing.

I feel what it's like to be diverse because I am. Some people are mean over something little. And everyone should try to help that person that is now sad. Even if they're not your friend.

I worry if diversity will die down in Columbia, then everything could become lifeless, like a dull pencil that doesn't write well.

I cry over how some cities are not diverse. How they won't allow some people to live there.

I am from Columbia, the city that is diverse in many ways of life, with many diverse people, including me.

I understand that Columbia is lucky to have such a variety of people that some do not get this wish of luckiness.

I say "you can join me" when someone leaves another out for being diverse when they don't realize they're diverse too, everyone is.

I dream of being in a perfect world when I realize there is no such thing as "a perfect world."

I try to make people believe in themselves. Not everything people say about you is always true.

I hope other people will try with me to stop the world and make it a diverse place.

I am from Columbia, the city that is diverse in many ways of life, with many diverse people, including me.

*Ms. McCarty, 6th grade, West Middle School*

## *Students*

*Connor Fitzmaurice*

In a brightly lit classroom full of students, some stand out more than others. While most people here were born and raised in America, the students who weren't have unique knowledge that enriches us all. Diverse cultural heritages enrich the community with outside knowledge and customs that a community of the same people would not experience.

One of these people is Aleks Shin. He comes from Russia, he is ethnically Korean, and he is a Kazakh Sunni. He is not afraid to show his cultural heritage, speaking various languages such as Russian, Spanish, English, and Serbian to different people who



understand them. He excels in his studies, particularly those which are not concurrent with stereotypes relating to his race. He volunteers at Mizzou teaching Origami to interested children.

Another is Devesh Kumar. He was born in Pakistan, and came to America when he was 10 in 5th grade. When he first moved here, he was very shy. He went to English classes to help with his speaking. He joined Debate club, and it expanded his horizons to new levels. It is unusual for Pakistanis to be Hindu, and Devesh openly represents a minority in not only the community but in the world. The RBHS debate team is glad to have him, and he is one of their varsity debaters.

Noah is another example of diversity in the community. His father was born in Libya, and came to America when he was 14. He went to RBHS, and when he was in school, he did not know English well. High school was difficult for him, but he was good at math because numbers were easy to learn in English. He grew up in an environment of both American and Libyan cultures, and he is in the Muslim Student Union.

Bill is another example of cultural diversity in Columbia. Bill is from China. He was born in China, and lived there for seven months before he moved to Utah because his father worked at Sony. He got a degree at a Utah college, then went to UCI institute in California. They lived there for five years before moving to Florida, and Bill's father taught at a Florida college until they moved to Missouri when Bill was 6. Bill was raised in an American setting, although when he lived in eastern LA his family was a part of the Chinese community. He has spent his life moving often. He learned English in preschool, and he can speak a little bit of Mandarin.

All the interviewees in this paper were taken from the same classroom, at the same table. Deep in its roots, Columbia has maintained a rich and diverse culture, and we have much we can learn from people who come from exotic places and cultures. Foreign languages can be heard in the hallways of my school, and they are taught as well. In a world more and more globalized each passing year, embracing our differences and learning from them is bringing the world closer together and helping to create world peace.

*Ms. Cone, 11th grade, Rock Bridge High School*

# *I am from*

*Michael Brouder*

I am from the dim light of dawn, from the cold 'morning Northwest winds  
and from the perfect streams of light in the sunrise.

I am from the ancient huge, oak trees that tower over my home.

I'm from the taste of the sweet Autumn winds.

I am from the beautiful, sparkling grass, right after a morning frost and the older  
oak tree, protecting the hilltop, whose protection over something as if it were my  
own.

I am from going to Nana's huge house for family reunions and Christmases, and  
from the singing lights of the Christmas tree

From the roasting turkey every Thanksgiving, and from the huge feasts we have  
every year.

I am from all of the good times, and recovering, helping my family getting back on  
their feet, and from all of those times we have blurted out something funny when  
we weren't supposed to.

I am from all of those times my parents told me what to do and what not to do. I  
am from the song, Stayin' Alive, because the spirit of that song is Stayin' Alive in my  
heart. I am from the awesome smell of the pizza at Shakespeare's Pizza and from  
the Boone Hospital in which I was born.

I am from all of the homemade Cowboy Chili we make and eat with our friends in  
Jefferson City and from the self-filling smoothies in the morning.

I'm from my best friend Zeke, who is always there when I am down or stressed  
and from the old arrowheads that we have salvaged from the old, dried-up creek  
bottom.

I am from all of the good things, and all of the bad things, recovered in my life.

*Dr. Willingham, 7th grade, Our Lady of Lourdes Interparish School*

# *Diversity*

*Ben Linnemeyer*

Everyone looks different on the outside. Everyone is the same on the inside. It does not matter if you have light skin or dark skin we are all the same on the inside. It does not matter if you have nothing or everything people are the same no matter what. If people have a disability help them with their struggles.

Dr. Martin Luther king Jr. changed the world and stopped unequal rights. He had a dream that black people should have the same rights as white people. His dream came true but he got killed because of his dream. Rosa Parks had a big part in diversity. Back then black people sat in the back of the bus and white people got the front. One day Rosa Parks sat in the front of the bus a white man told her to move she said, "No!" She was thrown in jail.

I think everyone should be able to do the same things in life. It does not matter what you look like or act like we are all the same on the inside. People will always look different so don't make fun of people who are not like you. You should treat people the way you want to be treated.

*Mrs. McGinty, 4th grade, Rock Bridge Elementary*

# *Diversity is good*

*Desirae Beasley*

Diversity is a helpful thing.

Diversity is a nice and special thing.

Diversity tells us apart.

Diversity means blacks and whites can play or be together.

Diversity helped bring my mom and dad together.

Diversity is why I'm here.

Diversity helped me know my friends.

Diversity gave me the qualities I have today.

Diversity means girls and boys can vote.

*Mrs. Nichols, 4th grade, Rock Bridge Elementary*

# *Columbia: A Giant Melting Pot*

*Genevieve Jones*

I come from a wacky mix of heritages. On my dad's side I'm German, Welsh, And Dutch. But on my mom's side I'm "Rigorous italiano e francese" (Strictly Italian and French). I have also been lucky enough to live in a town like Columbia, with all of it's crazy heritages and unique "Voices in it's Diverse Community".

I live in a college town. Home of the MU tigers (University of Missouri). Because of this, there are many different cultures, religions, heritages and ways of living in the small town of Columbia. I have met so many different people from around the world, just in my short lifetime! I think that towns without colleges don't have nearly as much diversity in comparison to larger towns with colleges.

My dad lived in a smaller town when he was growing up. He lived in Florissant, Missouri. Just a short drive from St. Louis. Now, don't you think that, since it's only a couple miles away from St. Louis that it would be bigger than Columbia? Well, it's not. Because it's not as big as St. Louis and Columbia there's not as much diversity. The fact that people in Florissant, and other communities like it, don't have a diverse culture similar to that of Columbia, makes it difficult to accept others whenever you eventually come across the "real world."

I think that all of the diversity in Columbia has had an impact on our way of living today. Take downtown for instance. You can walk right down Broadway and you'll see at least ten different restaurants, with influences from all across the globe. Why are there so many people in the small city of Columbia? The University of course. Many different people with a variety of cultures and a mix of heritages, like me, go to Mizzou. There are thousands of amazing, young, contrasting people in Columbia. Everyone is unique, and every individual has a voice.

I know lots of people with different religions and cultures. My diversity and my community's diversity has definitely made me who I am today. I love my town. I love all of my towns different cultures. I hope that generations to come will enjoy Columbia's amazing "Diverse Voices". I am thankful to live in a town with such an assortment of astonishing people.

*Ms. McCarty, 6th grade, West Middle School*

# Diversity

*Tyler Tucker*

Everybody is different in some way. It doesn't matter what colored skin you have or what kind of clothes you wear or if you have a disability or not we are all special. My class read a book called Wonder it is about a boy who has never gone to school because he has a facial deformity. Everybody is always staring when he walks by. Then he starts going to a school but there is a kid who is making fun of him and putting mean notes in his locker.

One person who changed the world was Rosa Parks. There was a rule that only white people could sit in the front of the bus and black people had to sit in the back. One time Rosa Parks sat in the front of the bus and wouldn't give up her seat for a white man and was taken to jail.

Even though Rosa Parks and the boy from Wonder are different they still weren't treated equally. We can learn from these stories. We should always treat each other equally and never make fun of someone just because they are different.

*Mrs. McGinty, 4th grade, Rock Bridge Elementary*

# Difference

*Alex Brechmacher*

**Different**

**Interesting**

**Value opinions**

**Everyone should be treated equally**

**Rejected**

**Special**

**In this world, different = good**

**The best thing about you is that you are diverse**

**You CAN make a difference!**

*Mrs. McGinty, 4th grade, Rock Bridge Elementary*

# *Diversity*

*Jacob Schroeder*

Diversity is the differences of people such as skin color, age, ethnic origin, values, and religion. These differences can cause problems or they can help us. It depends on how we look at each other and deal with the differences.

Differences can make us angry at each other especially when we don't understand why someone is different from us. We can be angry that someone doesn't believe the same things we believe. We can be scared of differences we don't understand. The differences between whites and black have been a problem in America for a long time.

There are benefits of diversity. One is that it lets people experience new things. It also helps people look at things in a different way. One of my favorite things diversity has brought to America is different food. The Italians gave us pizza. The Asians brought new foods that Americans enjoy now. There are lots of difference places around the world that brought new foods to this country.

People deal with diversity in good and bad ways. If we try to understand the differences good things can happen. And that's what diversity is about.

*Ms. McCarty, 6th grade, West Middle School*

## *The Diversity in Columbia Schools*

*Cale Littrell*

All around the world people have always been different whether it is their height, shape, or skin color. The world has made some places being diverse bad, but that is not the case in Columbia. It is important too, because people need a place to be themselves and relax without a care of what people think about them.

Now I am in sixth grade at West Middle School and the diversity is so large that you could not begin to count all of the people who are being themselves. People in Columbia have begun to express themselves in school because everyone does it so

"there is no weird". I think that is great too because if you were not able to express yourself then you would live a life locked up in a cage of your own thoughts.

The people that are not afraid to be diverse are usually the ones who have the most stress free times in school. In fact some schools have Cultural Fairs to celebrate diversity and to encourage being yourself and being proud of who you are. In modern day life in Columbia and at school people have come to realize that you have to be yourself otherwise you are just being a stereotype of what you want to be.

It's amazing that how many schools in Columbia are now encouraging everybody to be what they want to be and to be proud of what they are. And that is why diversity plays such an important part in our lives in Columbia.

*Ms. McCarty, 6th grade, West Middle School*

## *This world is my world only*

*Joseph Dye*

The door opens out not in  
There is always a taco truck outside  
Everybody loves Raymond  
The world is known completely  
We don't have a cure for Ebola  
Lead paint is healthy  
Miley Cyrus isn't crazy  
The Mc. Rib is gone forever  
No person has ever gone to the moon  
The Royals have won the World Series  
I am always right.

These are all examples of a person that only knows their perspective. Stop stereotyping and look at all perspectives before saying something because it might come out hurtful.

*Ms. Wahid, 8th grade, Smithton Middle School*

# Voices

*Grace Brinkmann*

Voices

When we work together

It's kind of like singing

When you sing

You can do well, by yourself

But you can do so much better together

When you do some for the community

If you do it together

It's like singing in unison

Its sounds beautiful

Even if a few voices are off pitch

You can raise your voice

And bring people together

To sing with you

And make a difference

Even with the different

Races and genders

With different

Backgrounds and history

We can still come together

And we can make a difference

*Mrs. Wahid, 8th grade, Smithton Middle School*



# *I am from*

*Emily Bacon*

I am from the leather couch in my living room  
From the smell of the sweet scentsy that is on in my kitchen.  
I am from the wooden floors that cover the hallways in my house.  
I'm from the black-eyed Susans,  
The black berry garden in my yard  
From the four wheeler rides and swimming in my pool  
From the three dogs I have and my sassy sister, who's tiny but mighty.  
I'm from the outgoing side of my family  
who likes to talk and tell stories.  
I'm from "don't jump on the couch"  
and "treat others as you would want to be treated."  
I'm from "pray-before-you-eat"  
I'm from taking pictures on the hay bales every year  
I'm from Columbia, Missouri and Germany (a long time ago).  
Meatloaf and chili on cold winter nights  
From when my dad told me not to talk to strangers, yet he talked to every stranger  
on our trip  
down to Gulf Shores.  
From the picture of my sister, cousins and I that was in the mall but is now in my  
living room.

*Dr. Willingham, 7th grade, Our Lady of Lourdes Interparish School*

# *Voices*

*Holden Larson*

There are many voices in our community, yet each voice is not the same as the voice of someone else. There are different accents and not everyone can speak as fluently as others, but the people that hold these amazing voices are from places all over the world. There are different skin colors, religions, and ethnicities. There is a lot of diversity but we are all one community a single group trying to live life. We all want to live life to the fullest and enjoy what we have and who we share it with.

We speak together as one to make our city, our state, and our country better. We may still see the differences between each other and make fun of another person because they are different. But it will get better we will one day not see a difference at all and no one will be making rude comments and jokes. But put aside that when it counts and a situation presents itself that puts us in danger we will come together to try to stop it. In that moment no one will see a difference between each other. We will just be a people, no colors, no races, no ethnic differences, we will just work together as one people. That is when we will realize that we all are harmony of voices speaking to get one thing. A better life.

*Ms. Wahid, 8th grade, Smithton Middle School*

## *Ideas*

*Ella McGinty*

**H**earing voices, from everywhere blending into community's perfect song

**A**re you going to stand up? To defend people being bullied? Will you use your voice?

**R**epresent your community with your voice, stand up for what is right, what you believe in.

**M**e. I can make a difference in the world I can make a change.

**O**ptions, will you use your voice for better or worse?

**N**o, I say to myself. I'm a little kid how can I make a change?

**Y**ou. You can make a change. You have a voice that has a place in our diverse community.

*Ms. Archer, 5th grade, Rock Bridge Elementary*

# Diversity

*Sadie Sweitzer*

Diversity means that there are many different and unique beings and objects in our world. Everyone is different and everyone should have the same rights. Columbia is a city that has this wonderful thing called diversity. Unfortunately, not every town does which is a shame. Just imagine if you lived in a world where everything was the same. The houses, the culture, the food and the people. That is a world I would never want to live in.

Diversity is what makes us who we are. If everyone was the same, then no one would be special. Diversity can come in many forms, such as food, culture, buildings, people, religion and more.

Diversity is peace. We must accept people for who they are, even if they are different than we are. If we all accept everybody then there will be peace among us.

Diversity does not just apply to the human race. In fact, humans are discovering more diversity each day. Plants, universes, foods, animals and stars have diverse characteristics that set them apart, but people accept their differences, so why should humans be any different?

Diversity is Columbia, Missouri. The people who support diversity in Columbia are heroes to our community. My school, West Middle School, is a very diverse community too. We have students from countries all over the world. That is what makes us unique.

I am privileged to share my life with friends and family of different cultures, colors and personalities. I will always accept them for who they are and I hope that one day everyone will accept each other as equals.

*Ms. McCarty, 6th grade, West Middle School*

# *Accept Me*

*Qy'sha Ross*

Diversity,  
Differences,  
Individual.

I am who I am.  
Whoever you are,  
that is who you will be.

To the countries,  
we are all people.

To the people of countries,  
we all have the same purpose,  
to live.

To you,  
accept the countries,  
accept the people of the countries,  
accept me.

*Mrs. Jones, 8th grade, West Middle School*

# *Diversity*

*Genevieve Roberts*

In the older days when there was slavery people were treated differently because they were diverse. People should celebrate being diverse. It would be boring if we all had brown eyes, purple hair and wore a Kansas City royals shirt every day to school. Being diverse is good. Individuality is key.

If we didn't have diversity in our lives, what would you feel like? Think about it for a second. Are you the person who makes fun of a person who might look different? People need to be diverse. People get bullied by how they look, how they talk or walk, how they dance or sing. We are ALL people. We ALL have ups and downs. We ALL are special in our own special ways. BE UNQUE! Be your OWN person. BE KIND TO OTHERS! We all have the right to be treated equally.

*Ms. Germeroth, 4th grade, Rock Bridge Elementary*

# *Looking into Darkness*

*Patrick Mayer*

One magical day, a very important man was born, his name was John William "Blind" Boone. He was born on May 17, 1864, in a federal militia camp close to Miami, Missouri.

Even before Boone's childhood, a life-changing event happened. He was diagnosed with brain fever. That changed his entire life because when he was six months old, doctors decided to remove Boone's eyes, in an effort to remove the deadly disease. Thank God he survived!

Growing up, Boone's life was very difficult, his mom, gone, his dad a bugler in the union, and as blind as a bat. Despite his bad luck, he decided to begin music.

He was quite a popular musician in his hometown, Warrensburg, Missouri. His hometown was so supportive of him, that they paid for his tuition at the St. Louis

School for the Blind in 1872.

After he learned as much as he thought he needed, he grew bored. In his boredom, he quickly became reckless, he was expelled shortly after. When he returned to Warrensburg, he started to play with the local musicians.

Boone proved that diversity is okay, and that being different from one another is what makes us human. Boone died from heart acute deflation on October 4, 1927 (Warrensburg, Missouri) His body lies at the Columbia Cemetery, in Columbia, Missouri.

*Ms. McCarty, 6th grade, West Middle School*

## *Diversity*

*Elly Hall*

"Don't judge a book by its cover"  
You have to read it  
Know it by the words on the page  
On the inside of the outside  
"Don't judge a book by its cover"  
"A picture is worth a thousand words"  
Each a snowflake  
Different and unique  
Coming from the pages of the book  
"A picture is worth a thousand words"  
"Variety is the spice of life"  
Sharp, sweet, rich  
One nutmeg, the other mint  
Diverse forevermore  
"Variety is the spice of life"

*Mrs. Tutt, 5th grade, Rock Bridge Elementary*

# *Diverse Means Different*

*Sophia Teddy*

Diversity, Columbia has it  
It is not something you have to buy or get  
It is something you have to embrace  
Everywhere people with diverse qualities are working together  
Columbia's community is working together to help this  
Diversity, everyone has it  
Other places don't express it as much  
They don't have the freedom we have  
Make your voice be heard, be different  
It doesn't matter, your skin or your hair, it's the inside that counts  
Diversity, it doesn't matter how you look  
Inside not outside  
Good not bad  
Columbia lets you be diverse, diverse means different  
Diversity, it can make you smile  
Clothes or hair, eyes or skin, we are all different that's what makes us, us  
Harmonious voices singing out, for you, me, and everyone in the community  
Speak up for the bad, sing for the good  
Diversity, Columbia has it.

*Ms. McCarty, 6th grade, West Middle School*

# *I am from*

*Jewel Smith*

I am from the old baby blanket that my grandmother made me.  
From fried eggs and crispy bacon.  
I am from the old barn look of my house.  
I am from the wild geraniums and the deer who like to nibble at its buds.  
I'm from Christmas trees and silliness  
From Smith and Brandt.  
I'm from eating raw cookie dough and yellow cake mix  
and from crunching ice in the summer.

I'm from "I love yous" and "GO TO YOUR ROOMS"  
and Mary had a little lambs.  
I'm from dress-up games  
I'm from playdates and hide and seek  
ice cream and rich, chocolaty brownies.  
From the story of the time my grandpa almost chopped off his nose,  
The pictures of the old Virgil Smith Quarry  
hanging proudly in the hallway.  
I am from those moments and many more  
to pass down from generation to generation.

*Dr. Willingham, 7th grade, Our Lady of Lourdes Interparish School*

## *The Diversity of Columbia*

*Montana Watson*

Diversity is what we seek;  
People look where we dare to peek.  
Look all around different cultures and races,  
The line of diversity is what it traces.  
Remember we are different in many cases,  
And together we must come to see many faces.  
We come together to be one,  
Knowing to leave out none.  
All this hatred must be shattered,  
So we can have many friends that matter.  
When we know we are one,  
We shall not shun.  
Knowing what I just said,  
What do you think in your head?  
Know if this is our last day to be,  
Lets have diversity.  
Let's take on the tough challenges that come our way!  
p.s. Fair is not equal

*Ms. Hoer, 11th grade, Battle High School*



# *Everyone has a story*

*Rachel Edidin*

Everyone has a story.

The old lady who lives on the corner  
clutches old family photos like they're lifelines in her wrinkled hands  
as she talks of her Polish heritage.

The man in the apartment next door  
speaks about slavery

"it could've been me" he says,  
over and over, the sound as repetitive as a heartbeat.

The young woman who lives two blocks down  
holds rosary beads against her fragile chest  
her lips move in silent prayer as she walks.

Everyone has a voice.

The Spanish-speaking family that communicates with elaborate hand signals.

The couple that shares their thoughts on gender equality with anyone  
who will spare even a second to listen.

The little boy who repeats, again and again,  
"don't judge me by my skin."

They are together.

We are together.

We are all connected, raising our voices higher and higher  
till they reach the sky.

No discrimination.

No boundaries.

Just a diverse community

singing

laughing

loving

living

as one.

*Mrs. Jones, 8th grade, West Middle School*

# *“GRANTed” A Diverse Education*

*Clara Strathausen*

The word diversity in the dictionary is defined as “the state of having people who are different races or have different cultures in a group or organization.” As soon as I read this definition I immediately thought of my elementary school, Grant, because of the cultural diversity there. There are many reasons I thought of Grant, including all the flags in the cafeteria/gym. These flags represented all the students from different countries that had been there. Almost everyday at lunch we would all have to try and guess which flags represented each country.

Grant also has a Multicultural Fair each year. People that have kids that go to Grant are asked to go to the gym and set up a little booth that shows things about the country they came from. These booths can have food, clothing, etc. Before you enter the fair you get a bookmark, and for each booth you ask the person running it to write your name in the language of their country. By the end of your time at the fair your bookmark was filled with your name written in many different languages.

Grant is also racially/ethnically diverse. There are children from different backgrounds that have had many different unique experiences. I believe that the racial diversity was good because it helped children become familiar with all different types of cultures. All of these reasons are why I think Grant is a very diverse school and an organization that helps promote diversity in Columbia.

*Ms. McCarty, 6th grade, West Middle School*

# *Every pair of eyes*

*Evann Twitchell*

Every pair of eyes that opens each morning  
Sees the world and the day to come in a different  
light.

Even when looking at the same thing,  
Each person's view is varied in some way.  
Difference makes us human.

When we see different meanings  
In what is all around us,  
We see different solutions to problems,  
And different sides to controversy,  
And different perspectives.  
Difference makes us better.

People are like colors  
Each a slightly varied shade.  
Painting with only a single sectors of colors,  
Would not make a rich piece of art.  
But with every color used,  
Serving its own unique purpose  
In the composition as a whole,  
The piece comes to life.  
The beauty of our shared humanity,  
Is our individual uniqueness.  
When we join harmoniously together,  
Contributing our unique attributes  
For the betterment of ourselves,  
As well as the whole,  
We celebrate life lived in it's fullest color.  
Alone, we cannot be complete.  
We are only a stoke on the canvas,

A piece of the puzzle.  
But combined,  
Our diversity connects together,  
And layers with others,  
To create something a story much more meaningful,  
Than we could have created on our own.

*Mrs. Cone, 12th grade, Rock Bridge High School*

## *We matter!*

*Brooke Hargrove*

We are all humans  
WE MATTER  
We are all alive  
WE MATTER  
We are not aliens  
WE MATTER  
We should not be treated differently  
WE MATTER  
We should treat people the way we want to be treated  
WE MATTER  
Our voices MATTER  
Our eyes MATTER  
Our hair MATTERS  
Our clothes MATTER  
Our bodies MATTER  
WE MATTER

*Ms. Hassemer, 4th grade, Shepard Elementary*

# Two Worlds

*Samuel Matthews*

Somewhere, someplace  
There is a world full of clones  
Men, women and children all alike, all the same  
Same cloths, same hair, same skin, and same personality  
They all do the same thing  
At twelve sharp they go outside to mow the lawn  
Once every Tuesday  
At three the kids come home  
And dinner at six  
They all go to the same school, and learn  
The something in the same way  
They are like robots,  
All programmed to do the same thing,  
And they do without question  
Same music  
Same sports  
Same religion  
Same everything  
This is a world without diversity  
A world unlike anything we have ever seen  
A world with no skin color, a black and white world  
Without the black and the white  
This is not Columbia  
We are a melting pot full of rich, diverse ingredients  
We are a colorful city in a beautiful world  
So many different people  
So many cultures  
So many individual lives  
All living together in a beautiful harmony  
And if you listen closely you can hear it  
The song we sing  
With all its individual parts  
Its melodies and harmonies

Its highs and its lows  
This is us  
This is Columbia  
This is our world

*Mrs. Wahid, 8th grade, Smithton Middle School*

## *I am from*

*Aaron Goedrich*

I am from Harry Potter,  
from Tide Laundry Detergent and tire swings  
I am from the brown walls and the cool night air  
I am from the beautiful flowers at the dinner table  
From the Bradford Pear Tree I climbed until I was as high as our roof.  
I'm from Kolaches and Pancake Friday.  
From deep Texan accents and sun-kissed skin.  
I'm from stealing others milkshakes and lots of leftovers  
and from gigantic bowls of ice cream.  
I'm from saying our thank yous and praying every night  
and singing "Bohemian Rhapsody."  
I'm from basketball and baseball.  
I'm from Columbia, MO and Czechoslovakia.  
From hamburgers and hot dogs over the fire.  
From jumping in the lake in the middle of March after a kayak.  
From young pictures of me all over the country under my mom's bed.

*Dr. Willingham, 7th grade, Our Lady of Lourdes Interparish School*

# *They say*

## *Nevaeh Rule*

They say that no two snowflakes are alike.  
Yet, in theory, they are the same.  
They are snowflakes; identical.  
Nonetheless, each one is unique.  
Likewise, no person is alike.  
And yet, we are the same.  
We are human; identical.  
Nevertheless, diversely unique.  
We take pride in the diversity.  
Of these white-winged, winter wonders from the sky.  
And yet, we frown upon the beings, the humans.  
That are different from us.  
Aren't we all just like the winter white angels?  
Identical in species.  
Yet each of us unique.  
In our own beautiful and wonderful way?  
I ponder to myself.  
The very question.  
Of the difference in diversity.  
And how we perceive and treat it.  
Why do we adore the pretty patterns?  
Of the winter white from the sky.  
Yet we ridicule and frown upon.  
The individuality in other people?  
Why do we take pride?  
In how different snowflakes are.  
While we shamelessly mock the differences.  
In our own kind?

*Mrs. Wahid, 8th grade, Smithton Middle School*

# Columbia

*Katherine Byars*

In a city as expansive as Columbia, fed on a steady diet of college students not only from all over the United States, but from all over the world, diversity is an unsurprising fact of life. It's not rare to find someone who sees the big picture of multiculturalism, but rather to find a narrow-minded bigot. As someone who has spent most of her life in tiny towns scattered throughout the deep south, I can assure native Columbians that this is not the case as far as the eye can see.

In the small, Tennessee town where I spent my middle school years, it was just a fact of life that I had to pretend to be Christian so that mothers would let their children be my friends. It was just a fact of life that I was rebuffed for disagreeing when others called homosexuality disgusting or made racist jokes. With that kind of background, you can imagine my surprise when I landed in Columbia, where you can hear multiple languages being spoken just by walking downtown for a few minutes, where "gay" isn't the dirtiest insult of all, and where our school doesn't have a moment of silence each morning specifically to pray to God.

Moving to Columbia was one of the best things that has ever happened to me, not only for the amazing group of friends I have found here or because of the great education, but because it made me see the world in a new light. It has opened my eyes not only to the idea that I can voice my own opinions and be heard, but to the profound effect that being involved in a community of people who do more than just fit the boring mold of the majority can have on the way you think. Moving here was one of the best things that has ever happened to me, because I truly value diversity, and so does Columbia.

*Ms. Cone, 11th grade, Rock Bridge High School*



# *The Harmony*

*Mary Park*

The unique lights in room 145 of MU Fine Arts Building shone brightly on my face, so I could hardly make eye contact with the judge. I wiggled my knees to make sure I was flexible enough. Soon, I took a long deep breath before playing the first note of my piece, Praeludium and Allegro, by Fritz Kreisler. As soon as I breathed out my nervousness and anxiety, I started my left hand vibrato. Then, I relaxed my left shoulder and pulled the bow steadily from the D string. I was never nervous whenever I performed in front of a large audience. However, the idea of state competition stressed me out. My hands were frozen, and it was hard to concentrate since my body temperature was low. In spite of every problem I could think of, I simply closed my eyes and imagined that I was playing this wonderful piece of music for God. I had been the state winner for violin two years in a row. Why on Earth was I nervous?

I have been playing the violin for about seven years, and I never thought I would go far with violin. I am in a Columbia community orchestra called MOSS (Missouri Orchestra Symphony Society). It's unbelievable how the community orchestra has grown in just a few years. Apparently, there were about 20 members back in 2007. Now, there are about 130 members and the society is still growing. What I like about MOSS is that we as an orchestra get to perform at places throughout Columbia such as Lenoir Woods and Senior Center. The orchestra gives young musicians numerous chances to enhance their stage performances and improve musically by playing solos and sharing musical talents with the community.

Even though Columbia is a small city compared to St. Louis and Kansas City, it offers many opportunities for individuals to share their talents. A friend of mine who moved to Columbia from Kansas City told me that there wasn't a program like MOSS in Kansas City. In addition, she said that it was hard to stand out and sparkle from other violists back in Kansas City since everyone was talented. In addition to playing in MOSS, I play the violin for Thomas Newman Center at MU for 11 o'clock mass on Sundays. My church is lucky to have a small band-like ensemble, so parishioners can listen to various musical instruments ranging from alto saxophone to harp to percussion and violin. The music that my fellow musicians and I play helps create exciting masses that energize the local parishioners.

Violin has helped me become part of the Columbia community and find success. Through music, I have made many new friends who were interested in music like me. I have also found lots of mentors who helped me on anything I needed help with. When the competition results came out, the award announcer only had two certificates and one trophy. My heart started racing as if I was running a marathon. I held my breath and looked down, observing the calluses on the tips of my fingers from violin strings. When the announcer said my name, I hesitated at first, wondering if she actually called my name. As I stood up from my seat to receive my trophy, I felt salty tears rolling down my cheeks. I had become the state winner for three times now.

Music will always be a part of me, and Columbia has helped me with numerous musical experiences that are extremely valuable. Everyone becoming one minded to work in unison results in an amazing performance and every single member of an orchestra contributes in creating a beautiful harmony. In order to make Columbia a better city to live in, it's crucial for everyone in Columbia to play to their talents and cooperate to create the perfect harmony for our city.

*Mr. McFarland, 9th grade, Hickman High School*

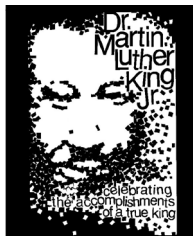
This collection of student writings is sponsored by  
McDonald's Restaurants of Columbia



Student writings were compiled by the following members of the  
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Original paper collage by  
Brooke Vangel  
Columbia, MO • 1995

Printing provided by

